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AMONG THE GOLD DIGGERS OF SOUTH AFRICA

Common-Sense Methods of Mission Work Conducted by the South African Compounds and Interior Missions

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THE DARK CONTINENT—A SILENT APPEAL

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GOSPEL MEETING AT THE COMPOUND OF THE NATIVE LABOR ASSOCIATION, SOUTH AFRICA

AMONG THE GOLD DIGGERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

MISSION WORK IN THE WITWATERSRAND, TRANSVAAL

BY A. W. BAKER, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA
Honorary Director of the South African Compounds and Interior Mission

THE Witwatersrand (White Water's Range) is a district in the Transvaal, about 1,000 miles from Cape Town, 500 from Durban, and 380 from Lourenço, Marques, the three principal ports of South Africa, its center being the city of Johannesburg, which is connected with these three ports by rail. Imagine a huge wheel, the tire or circumference of which includes all South Africa, and part of Central Africa as far as Lake Nyasa. The hub represents Johannesburg, and the spokes are the roads from all points leading to the Rand. People those spokes with myriads, like black ants, thronging constantly to and fro, and dropping off the spokes at every few miles. These myriads are the natives of some 40 tribes thronging the gold mines and passing to and fro all the year. Or picture to yourself Johannesburg as the heart of South Africa, drawing into itself all the best blood of all her native tribes, and then pumping it back into all the veins and brains and customs of her social life; and this will give some idea of the tremendous importance of this magnificent center of work. Some one has said, awfully but truly, "they come to us *savages,* and they leave us *devils.*" Thank God, "the Gospel is still the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" and still possesses life-giving power. Its healing, cleansing, enlightening and uplifting influences have been carried forth to every part of that great circumference.

The gold mines at this center first began to attract native laborers in or about the year 1887, and rapidly ex-

tended until at the present time they cover some 60 miles from east to west. Along this line, at intervals of a few hundred yards, are dotted the compounds. These are great square enclosures in which the natives of the various tribes are housed in rooms, containing from 10 to 50 men. The number in any given compound varies from 1,000 to 6,000. The largest proportion of these laborers are recruited by agents of labor associations, of which the most important is the Witwatersrand Native Labor Association. These gather the workers into compounds in their own territories, and feed, clothe and transport them to a central compound at the Rand, from whence they are distributed in batches to the various mines connected with the association. They receive wages ranging from $10 to $15 monthly, and their food. Some, by displaying exceptional mechanical ability and trustworthiness, earn as much as $25. They serve in gangs under white bosses, and these usually appoint one of the natives as boss-boy. They work on shifts, day and night, alternating every week. These shifts differ in different mines; on some they last eight hours, on others nine, or even twelve in exceptional cases.

When off shift their time is their own, and is devoted to all kinds of pursuits, preparing their food, mending clothes, making necklets, bracelets, or other ornaments for sale, dancing, visiting friends in adjacent compounds in the same labor district, or in sleep. To visit any other labor district a special pass is required from the compound manager, and there are stated days and hours when these passes are issued free of charge. Each mine or group of mines has a native hospital with a white overseer and native helpers. This hospital is visited daily by a physician, and medicines and attention are given free of charge to patients.

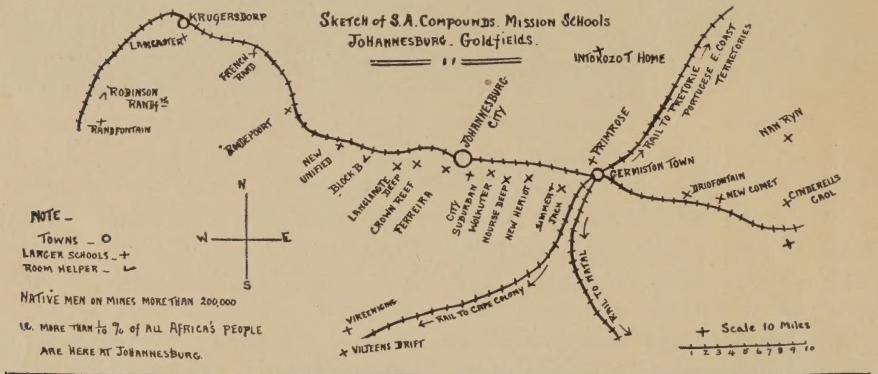
With the exception of some 5 per cent., who are employed on necessary labor, the workers are free from midnight on Saturday until Monday morning, a great number being free from 6 P.M. on Saturday. This is the period in which the illicit liquor-dealer plies his hellish traffic and makes such immense profits that imprisonment (without the option of a fine) for six months for a first offense, and for twelve months on conviction for the second time appears to have no terrors for him. There is a regiment of from 800 to 1,000 illicit rum-sellers, mostly whites, in gaol all the time. We believe that this is entirely due to the suicidal policy of relaxing the prohibition law and permitting employers to give what is called "kafir beer," brewed from corn with a small percentage of alcohol, to their natives as a preventative against scurvy. The craving is awakened in those who have not become alcoholized, and stimulated in those who have, and then the victim *must* satisfy it.

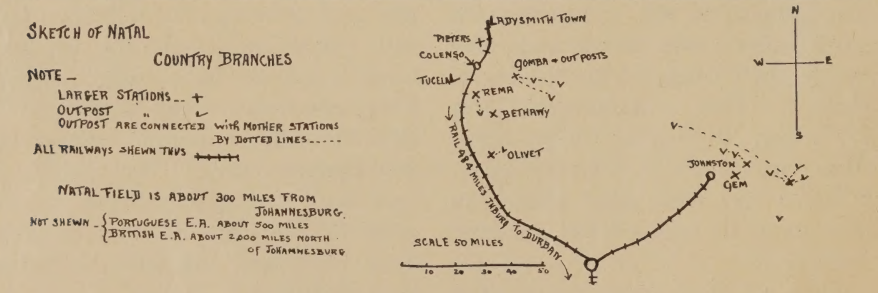
With but few exceptions the compounds and hospitals are open to the ministrations of the Christian worker at any time on Sunday; and it would be hard to find a finer vantage-ground for preaching the Gospel in any part of the world. The very finest youth and manhood of all the South African tribes, ranging from 15 to 50 years of age, are here assembled within reach of the Gospel, and

in any one compound members of many tribes may be found, and as many as 15 tribes may be represented in one compound. On one occasion 13 men who knelt with us as penitents in the ring, represented no less than 10 African tribes. On January 28, 1911, we baptized 26 converts, comprizing members of seven tribes.

When the evangelist addresses one group of natives in any of the mine compounds he may be preaching in that one service to men who will carry the Gospel to half a dozen different parts of Africa. The reader will note that the number now employed in the mines and towns along the Rand approximates 300,000, and these are constantly going and coming, and as the period of enlistment is for one year, and the great majority do not stay longer before returning home, approximately half a million of men visit and work on these fields in the course of three years.

There are also a considerable number of unmarried native girls in domestic service who are subjected to very severe temptation from white as well as black men. Some special work should be immediately undertaken for these girls. The locations adjoining some mine compounds and the towns are also occupied by a considerable number of colored women who are living lives of shame. The marriage laws of the Transvaal in relation to the native peoples are a scandal to humanity, and provocative of the most flagrant immorality. The man whose wife proves unfaithful to him has no redress against her or her paramour. When taxation is being





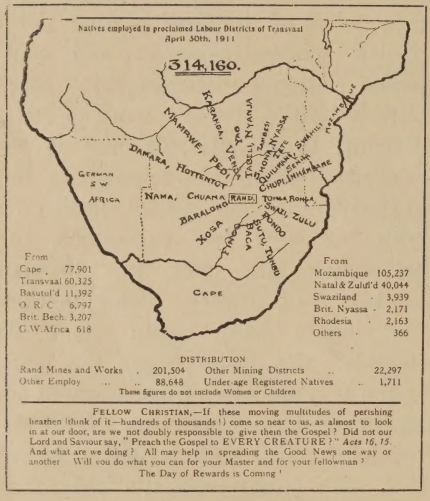
imposed the native woman is reckoned to be the wife of the man who has taken her as such according to native law and custom, but the courts of law refuse to recognize the relationship as that of man and wife.

Yielding to a very distinct call from God, the writer, in the year 1895, relinquished the practise of the law in Pretoria, and in February, 1896, commenced work in the city and suburban compound at Johannesburg. He was soon joined by Mr. Angus Black, and then by Mr. Mabille, and later by Mr. Rivett and others from time to time, and later, during a trip to Australia in 1899, the constitution of the mission was framed on interdenominational lines, and it was called the South African Compounds Mission. A central council was formed in Melbourne, and committees formed in several other centers in Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania. During the period of the war, Mr. L. A. Swanson remained in Johannesburg and did excellent work, of which the fruits were manifest as soon as peace was restored. Abstinence from alcohol and from tobacco in all its forms, open confession of sin and restitution were made conditions of membership. The great majority of the natives at that time came from Portuguese possessions in the southeast. Our principal object was not to educate, but to evangelize; that is, not to give higher education to a select few, but to equip every convert with an elementary knowledge of the Word of God and the doctrines of grace, and to send him back as an evangelist to his people. We, therefore, determined not to teach English or other foreign languages, but to teach them to read the Word of God in their mother tongue, and to be able to write, so as to keep in touch with us.

When the work was first begun there was a very strong prejudice against the preaching of the Gospel to Kafirs, and a still stronger one against any form of education. As we considered it essential to have our halls right alongside of the compounds, and all this land was under the control of the Gold Mining Companies, whose managers and compound managers were in many cases bitterly hostile, it was a work of some difficulty to get sites, or even to obtain admission to the compounds, but gradually the way opened, until now with but very few exceptions, the compounds are open to Christian workers of every denomination. Carrying a baby organ upon his shoulder, the writer began the work in the City and Suburban Compound, where, by kind permission of the directors, he had built a hall 40 by 20 feet, with two rooms attached for a native evangelist, and a small cottage for himself.

From that small beginning in February, 1896, the work has extended until we now have 21 halls along the Reef, each of which has its native teacher-evangelist, himself a convert of the mission, and supported by the free-will offerings of his congregation. Converts are taught that they ought to give at least one-tenth of their income to the Lord, but no pressure is exerted. Each congregation elects its own treasurer, who collects the tithes and the free-will offerings on the Lord's Day, and puts them into his bag. From this bag the teacher receives from £2 to £3 monthly if there be funds sufficient.

If there are less than £2 ($10), the mission makes up the difference from general funds. The object in fixing the allowance for evangelists at less than the average wage in the mines was to take away any incentive to seek the office for the sake of gain, and to confine it to those who felt called of God and would take the work out of love to Him. The aver-


Natives employed in proclaimed Labour Districts of Transvaal
April 30th, 1911
314,160.
KHAMAWE, PYGMY
DAMARA, HOTTENTOT
GERMAN S.W. AFRICA
NAMA, CHUANA
RAND
BARALONG
BASUTO
XOSA
FINGO
PONDO
TEMBU
GALEKA
TSWANA
ZULU
CAPE
From
Cape . 77,901
Transvaal 60,325
Basutu'd 11,392
O. R. C. 6,797
Brit. Bech. 3,207
G.W.Africa 618
From
Mozambique 105,237
Natal & Zulu'd 40,044
Swaziland . 3,939
Brit. Nyassa . 2,171
Rhodesia . 2,163
Others . 366
DISTRIBUTION
Rand Mines and Works . 201,504
Other Mining Districts . 22,297
Other Employ . . 88,648
Under-age Registered Natives . 1,711
These figures do not include Women or Children
FELLOW CHRISTIAN,—If these moving multitudes of perishing heathen (think of it—hundreds of thousands!) come so near to us, as almost to look in at our door, are we not doubly responsible to give them the Gospel? Did not our Lord and Saviour say, "Preach the Gospel to EVERY CREATURE?" Acts 16, 15. And what are we doing? All may help in spreading the Good News one way or another. Will you do what you can for your Master and for your fellowman?
The Day of Rewards is Coming!

age wage of the laborers in the compounds is about £2 10s. ($12.50) and food. The evangelists have to provide their own food out of their allowance. The temptation to shirk work so as to attend school is overcome by holding two sessions, the night shift workers coming from 8:30 to 10 A.M., and then having their sleep, the day shift coming from 6:30 to 8:30 P.M. When they have mastered the 21 language charts on the walls they pass into the spelling-book or first reader, and from that into the Testament, and take their places in the Bible class. On Wednesday and Saturday evenings evangelistic services are held in the halls. The evangelist is expected to visit the hospitals in his vicinity once or twice a week, and to exhort and pray with the inmates.

On the Lord's Day, their only day of rest, a number of the converts gather at the hall at about 8 A.M., in groups of from 10 to 50. After a prayer service of half an hour, these people go forth to preach the Word in the open air. When the group exceeds 20 it usually divides into two parties, three or four compounds being apportioned to each. These groups continue thus, holding several open-air services in each compound until 1 P.M., and then return to their hall and have lunch together. At three o'clock in the afternoon they assemble in the hall and have an evangelistic service, and reassemble again at 7 P.M. for the same purpose.

Let us visit a compound. Outside of the gate and in front of the manager's office is gathered a huge crowd of natives surrounding a band of 200 or more dancers, semi-nude, and decked out with ostrich feather headdresses, oxtail appendages to arms and knees, and skins and tails of various wild animals depending from their waists. Before them, and seated on the ground, are a score or more of drummers with their native pianos or tom-toms, and these are flanked by half a dozen big drummers with hogsheads, or iron oil-drums covered with hide which produce a deep basso. On the veranda stand a group of white ladies and gentlemen for whom this special exhibition of savage and lewd barbarism has been arranged. It will be paid for with an extra supply of beer.

We pass them sadly and enter the compound. Setting down our har-

monium we soon have a group of 100, perhaps 200, heathen around us. They are very musical and quickly pick up a chorus. A hymn is sung —two short testimonies are given by converts, in different dialects; I follow with a Gospel address, and then make a strong personal appeal for decision for Christ. Down we all go on our knees. This is the signal for 20 or 30 to scamper off laughing loudly, while others saunter past, making jocular, and often uncomplimentary, remarks. A chorus is sung, "Come to Jesus, Come to Jesus, Come to Jesus Just Now." Then one creeps out and then another, and yet one more, and kneel before the preacher, who, laying his hand on each head in turn, says, "Now, just tell the Lord what you want Him to do for you." After each seeker has offered his broken prayer, all three follow in a prayer for pardon and for cleansing and for the Holy Spirit. The Christians now gather round and shake hands with the penitents, inviting them to the nearest school, their names are taken, and very often this becomes the first step in a life that is subsequently signally owned of God in the redemption of others. We move off and hold similar services in different parts of this large compound. Then we go on to the Witwatersrand Native Labor Association's distributing compound. Native recruits crowd into one of the large airy rooms, climb up on to the sleeping-galleries, squat upon the floor, fill up every available space, and crowd around the door. In this audience of 600 or 700 there are representatives of perhaps 15 or 20 tribes, from as far north as Lake Nyasa to the southernmost point of Africa, and from Quilimane in the east to Damaraland on the west; and among our converts are men who are ready to witness for Christ in almost any of these languages.

Thus, on every Lord's Day 21 groups of living witnesses to the power of the Gospel of Christ are busy from one end of the Rand to the other, sowing the seed of the Kingdom and reaping as they sow. This training fits them for evangelistic work in their own homes, and the truth is prest upon them that they are saved to save others. So effectively has the Holy Spirit used these simple witnesses that in one district of Portuguese Gazaland alone our converts have opened some 40 schools and preaching-places, and are carrying on the work of teaching and preaching without renumeration; and on three pastoral visits it has been my joyous privilege to baptize respectively 160, 121, and 65 of their converts.

In Natal also, our converts have evangelized extensive districts, and have several churches and many outstations. There is scarcely a district in South Africa where converts of this mission are not at work in connection with various other missionary societies. We have had the glad privilege of baptizing 3,017 converts, representing 30 tribes; and many redeemed ones have gone triumphantly into the presence of the King.

There are many compounds which are scarcely touched, and not one that is adequately and thoroughly evangelized. We need Spirit-filled leaders to take up and systematize and organize the work in this grand strategic center of evangelism for Africa. May God anoint and send them forth.

This Mission is interdenominational. Its creed includes: Belief in and acceptance of the Whole Bible as the inspired and infallible word of God. Belief in the absolutely lost condition of humanity and that the Blood of Christ is the only and sufficient atonement for sin. Belief in the person and word of the Holy Spirit and determination not to rest satisfied until filled with the Holy Spirit. Expectant looking for the Lord's Second Coming.

We have 21 halls along the Gold Reefs at Johannesburg, Transvaal, which are used as day and night schools with the object of teaching the natives in their own language to read the Word of God and to write so as to keep in touch with us after they go home. We not only teach every convert that he is saved to serve, but harness him in as an open air worker at once and send him 'round on Sunday with our preaching bands to learn how to do the work of the Evangelist. On the Lord's Day twenty-one companies of Evangelists go out into the Compounds where the heathen are congregated in their thousands and preach the Gospel and testify of what the Lord has done for them. Every week one or more come for letters of dismissal and start off for their distant homes carrying their Bible and Hymn Book with them, and start a center of work in their own kraal or village. In this way the Gospel is carried right away into the interior in every direction for more than a thousand miles.

We are employing at Johannesburg twenty-two native evangelists who are all converts of the Mission and are supported almost entirely by the voluntary offerings of the converts who are encouraged to give at least one tenth of their earnings to the Lord's work.

We insist on industrial occupation even for preachers. At Intokons we have a printing press run by a black printer and his assistant where we print our monthly magazine, *"Africa's Golden Harvest,"* a monthly Zulu magazine and booklets in English and native dialects. We have had the privilege of baptising over 3017 converts, representing over 30 different tribes. In British East Africa, 18 miles north of Port Florence we have a work among the Banjorie Tribe, and their country has been allotted to us by the Government in fixing the spheres of different tribes and Missions.

Besides myself we have only four white missionaries, some of whom are self-supporting. Sometimes funds have been very scarce, but there has been no complaint and the Lord has never let us want for a meal. We feel the need for greater concentration in the work at our great Strategic Center, the Goldfields, and could very easily open a dozen more halls if we had the available funds. There is also a large field in the coal mines for aggressive work for Christ.

Inquiries may be made of any of the honorary secretaries of the Missions who will vouch for the character of the work and the workers. Bretheren, the need of the work is *prayer*. Will *you* pray for us and if God so moves your heart, join us in helping forward this work that is so wonderfully blessing in the Goldfields of South Africa.

LIST OF STATIONS

TRANSVAAL

City and Suburban	Langlaagte Deep
Wolhuter	Roodepoorte
New Heriot	French Rande
Simmer and Jack	South Randfontein
New Primrose	Vereeniging
Driefontein	Viljoen's Drift
New Comet	Ferreira
Van Ryn	Intokozo Training Home
Nigel	
Crown Reef	Nourse Deep
New Unified	

BRITISH EAST AFRICA

PORTUGUESE S. E. AFRICA

NATAL

Oilvet	Gomba	Gem
Ramza	Tugela	Perseverance
	Johnston	